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Trump vows 'no going back' on Greenland

• Shares leaked texts & AI mock-ups • EU sees opportunity to build 'new independent Europe' • Bessent urges leaders to calm down

DAVOS: US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday there was 'no going back' on his goal to control Greenland, refusing to rule out taking the Arctic island by force and rounding on allies as European leaders struggled to respond.

Trump's ambition — spelled out in social media posts and mock-up AI images — to wrest sovereignty over Greenland from fellow Nato member Denmark has threatened to blow apart the alliance that has underpinned Western security for decades.

It has also threatened to reignite a trade war with Europe that rattled markets and companies for months last year, though Trump's Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent pushed back against what he called "hysteria' over Greenland.

"As I expressed to everyone, very plainly, Greenland is imperative for National and World Security. There can be no going back On that, everyone agrees!" Trump said after speaking to NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte.

To drive home the message, Trump posted an AI image of himself in Greenland, holding a US flag. Another showed him speaking to leaders next to a map showing Canada and Greenland as part of the United States.

Separately, he leaked messages including from French President Emmanuel Macron, who questioned what Trump was 'doing on Greenland'. Trump, who has vowed to impose tariffs on countries that stood in his way, had earlier threatened to hammer French wines and champagnes with a 200pc tariff.

'New independent Europe'

The European Union has threatened to hit back with trade measures. One option is a package of tariffs on 93 billion euros ($109 billion) of US imports that could automatically kick in on Feb 6 after a six-month suspension.

Another option is the "Anti-Coercion Instrument" (ACI), which has never yet been used. It could limit access to public tenders, investments or banking activity, or restrict trade in services, the sector in which the US has a surplus with the bloc, including the lucrative digital services provided by US tech giants.

Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen told parliament in Copenhagen on Tuesday the worst may still lie ahead. "We can negotiate about everything political, including security, investments and the economy, but we cannot negotiate our most fundamental values: sovereignty, our country's identity, our borders, our democracy," she said.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, speaking at the annual World Economic Forum in Davos, which Trump is also due to attend this week, sought to rally leaders around building a "new independent Europe".

"The seismic change we are going through today is an opportunity, in fact a necessity to build a new form of European independence," she said.

"We will only be able to capitalise on this opportunity if we recognise that this change is permanent," she added.

Bessent pushes back against 'hysteria'

Bessent, also speaking at the Davos gathering of the world's political and business elite, said a solution would be found that ensures national security for the United States and Europe.

"It's been 48 hours. As I said, sit back, relax," he said. "I am confident that the leaders will not escalate and that this will work out in a manner that ends up in a very good place for all."

Asked about the prospect of a prolonged trade war between the US and Europe, Bessent replied: "Why are we jumping there? Why are you taking it to the worst case?... Calm down the hysteria. Take a deep breath."

Danish sovereignty over Greenland questioned

Protesters marched in Zurich, Switzerland, late on Monday, carrying a giant banner saying: "TRUMP NOT WELCOME. NO WEF! NO OLIGARCHY! NO IMPERIALIST WARS!", Swiss newspaper NZZ reported.

The foreign minister of Russia, which has been watching with glee as Trump's drive to acquire Greenland widens splits with Europe, said that "Greenland is not a natural part of Denmark" and also denied that Moscow had any designs on the island.

"It was neither a natural part of Norway nor a natural part of Denmark," Sergei Lavrov told reporters in Moscow. "It is a colonial conquest. The fact that the inhabitants are now accustomed to it and feel comfortable is another matter." —Reuters

Israel demolishes UN property in east Jerusalem

• UNRWA slams 'unprecedented attack'; Israeli foreign ministry claims 'ownership'
• Palestinian football club in occupied West Bank faces imminent demolition

JERUSALEM: Israeli bulldozers began demolitions at the headquarters of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees in east Jerusalem on Tuesday, in what the organisation called an "unprecedented attack" and a "serious violation of international law".

UNRWA spokesman Jonathan Fowler said that Israeli forces "stormed into" the compound shortly after 7am and ejected security guards from the site, before bulldozers entered and began demolishing buildings.

"This is an unprecedented attack against UNRWA and its premises. And it also constitutes a serious violation of international law and the privileges and immunities of the United Nations," Fowler said.

"What happens today to UNRWA can happen tomorrow to any other international organisation or diplomatic mission around the world," he warned.

The demolition of the UNWRA headquarters comes at a time when a Palestinian children's football club in the occupied West Bank faces imminent demolition after being threatened by Israel, despite an international campaign to save it, according to a *BBC* report.

Roland Friedrich, the agency's director in the occupied West Bank called the move political, saying "it seems the intent is to seize the land for settlement construction as has openly been stated by Israeli officials for many years in the media and elsewhere".

AFP photos showed heavy machinery demolishing structures at the UNWRA compound, where now an Israeli flag fluttered overhead.

An AFP photographer reported that far-right Israeli

AN Israeli flag flutters above the demolished compound of UNRWA headquarters in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of occupied east Jerusalem.— AFP

National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir had made a brief visit to the site. "For years, these supporters of terrorism were here, and today they are being removed from here along with everything they built in this place. This is what will happen to every supporter of terrorism," the Israeli minister said.

A series of investigations, including one led by France's former foreign minister Catherine Colonna, found some 'neutrality-related issues' at UNRWA but stressed Israel had not provided conclusive evidence for its headline allegation.

'Ownership'

In a statement, the Israeli foreign ministry defended the demolitions and said Israel "owns the Jerusalem compound".

The compound in Israeli-occupied territory has been empty of UNRWA staff since January 2025, when Israel "banned" its operations in the Gaza Strip.

"UNRWA-Hamas had already ceased its operations at this site and no longer had any UN personnel or UN activity there," the foreign ministry asserted.

"The compound does not enjoy any immunity and the seizure of this compound by Israeli authorities was carried out in accordance with both Israeli and international law," it insisted.

UNRWA's Friedrich said the UN rejected the Israeli claim, explaining that the compound "remains United Nations property and is protected by the privileges and immunities of the UN, regardless of whether it is currently in use".

Though the UNRWA ban applies in east Jerusalem due to its occupation by Israel, the agency still operates in Gaza.

Attempt to erase identity

UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini denounced the demolitions on X, saying it was yet another attempt by "Israeli authorities to erase the Palestine Refugee identity".

Meanwhile, a Palestinian children's football club in the occupied West Bank faces imminent demolition despite an international campaign to save it, according to a *BBC* report.

Its supporters say it provides a rare sporting opportunity for young Palestinian players, particularly those living in the nearby Aida refugee camp, while Israel declared it illegal.

On Nov 3, 2025 the children found a notice pinned to the gate of the football field. It was followed soon by a demolition order.—Agencies/Monitoring Desk

China asks Taliban govt to protect its citizens

Demand comes after militant group Islamic State claimed the Kabul blast

KABUL: China has demanded that the Taliban government in Afghanistan take effective measures to protect Chinese nationals after seven people were killed in a blast in Kabul on Monday.

Six Afghans and one Chinese national were killed, and several others were injured in the blast at a Chinese restaurant in a heavily-guarded part of the city centre.

Guo Jiakun, a spokesperson for China's foreign minister, told a press briefing on Tuesday that China has requested the Afghanistan government to spare no effort in treating the injured.

On Monday, videos shared on social media showed smoke billowing from a large hole torn in the facade of the restaurant building, while debris littered the street outside.

"We have received 20 people at our hospital," Dejan Panic, the Afghanistan director of humanitarian group EMERGENCY, said in a statement, adding that seven were dead on arrival.

"Among the wounded are four women and a child."

The Taliban took control of war-torn Afghanistan in 2021 and said it would restore security, but bomb attacks have continued, many of them claimed by the local arm of the Islamic State group.

Militant group Islamic State claimed the Monday's blast that tore through a Chinese-run restaurant in the commercial Shahr-e-Naw area, police spokesperson Khalid Zadran said.

The Afghan branch of Islamic State militant group said in a statement it was carried out by a suicide bomber.

The restaurant serving the Chinese Muslim community was jointly run by a Chinese Muslim man, Abdul Majid, his wife, and an Afghan partner, Abdul Jabbar Mahmood, Zadran said. "The nature of the explosion is unknown so far and is being investigated," he said.

The Amaq news agency said the domestic arm of Islamic State had put Chinese citizens on its list of targets, citing "growing crimes by the Chinese government against Uyghurs". Rights groups accuse Beijing of widespread abuses of Uyghurs, a mainly Muslim ethnic minority group numbering about 10 million.—Agencies/Monitoring Desk

UAE, Bahrain accept invite to join 'Board of Peace'

DUBAI: The UAE president and Bahrain's king accepted on Tuesday an invitation to sit on US President Donald Trump's 'Board of Peace', joining a handful of countries to have endorsed the initiative.

The oil-rich United Arab Emirates and fellow Gulf country Bahrain are top US allies in the region and among the Arab nations with official ties to Israel after signing the Abraham Accords during Trump's first term in 2020.

"Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, has accepted the invitation from the United States to join the Board of Peace," the UAE foreign ministry said in a statement.

The Bahraini foreign ministry said King Hamad bin Issa Al Khalifa "has accepted the invitation extended by His Excellency President Donald Trump of the friendly United States of America to join the 'Board of Peace'".

Emirati Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed said, "The UAE's decision reflects the importance of fully implementing President Donald J Trump's 20-point peace plan for Gaza, which is critical for the realisation of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people."

Also, a Turkish foreign ministry source said, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio discussed on Tuesday Trump's Board of Peace initiative as well as recent developments in Syria in a phone call.

Some leaders offered ambiguous responses. Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said her country was "ready to do our part", while Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney said Ottawa had "agreed in principle" pending further details.

The inclusion of a 'charter' in the invitation letter triggered concerns among some European states that it could undermine the UN that Trump accused of "not supporting" his efforts "to end conflicts" in the world.—Agencies

Humanity faces 'era of water bankruptcy', says UN report

Leaders urged to wake up to 'new reality' as the world is living beyond its 'hydrological means'

By Amin Ahmed

ISLAMABAD: The world is experiencing the dawn of an "era of water bankruptcy", according to a United Nations report.

The report, released on Tuesday, invited leaders to facilitate "honest, science-based adaptation to a new reality" amid chronic depletion of groundwater, over-allocation of water, land and soil degradation, deforestation, and pollution — all compounded by global warming.

Titled "Global Water Bankruptcy: Living Beyond Our Hydrological Means in the Post-Crisis Era", the report was produced by the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health.

It noted that in many regions, water systems were already in a "post-crisis state of failure".

Over decades, societies have extracted more water than climate and hydrology can provide, drawing down not only the annual 'income' of renewable flows but also the 'savings' stored in aquifers, glaciers, soils, wetlands, and river ecosystems.

At the same time, pollution, salination, and other forms of degradation have reduced the fraction of water that is safely usable, the latest UN report observed.

In the Middle East and North Africa, high water stress, climate vulnerability, low agricultural productivity, energy-intensive desalination, and sand and dust storms intersect with complex political economies.

Decline in water table

In parts of South Asia, groundwater-dependent agriculture and urbanisation have produced chronic declines in water tables and subsidence; and in the American southwest, the Colorado River and its reservoirs have become symbols of "over-promised water".

"The consequences of water bankruptcy are now visible on every continent: rivers no longer reach the sea; lakes, wetlands, and glaciers have shrunk or disappeared; aquifers pumped down until land subsides and salt intrudes; forests and peatlands are drying and burning; deserts and dust storms are expanding, and cities are repeatedly brought to the brink of 'day zero'," the UN study said.

Drawing on global datasets and recent scientific evidence, the report presented a stark statistical overview of trends, the overwhelming majority of which are caused by humans.

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